



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL EXPERTS CONVENE IN MEMPHIS FOR CONVERSATION ABOUT PROSPERITY

Memphis, TN – Mayor A C Wharton Jr. hosted a convening of national experts for a Conversation about Prosperity at the Memphis Cook Convention Center today. It included some of America's leading authorities and most respected experts on urban issues and public policy.

The speakers and panelists included: Angela Glover Blackwell – Founder/CEO of PolicyLink in Oakland, CA; Marc Morial, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League in New York and former mayor of New Orleans; Scott Bernstein, President and Co-founder of Chicago's Center for Neighborhood Technology; Spencer Cowan, Senior Vice President of Research for The Woodstock Institute in Chicago, IL; and Kristy Martino, U.S. Poverty Grassroots Organizer for RESULTS, Inc. in Portsmouth, NH.

"This Conversation about Prosperity is an important initiative of my Blueprint for Prosperity, a plan to reduce poverty by 10% over the next 10 years," said Mayor Wharton. "We've talked as a nation for 50 years about reducing poverty, yet we have not succeeded in significantly reducing it. Memphis remains one of the poorest cities in America. While we aspire to make Memphis a City of Choice, there looms the hard reality that far too many Memphians have few to no choices when it comes to the condition of poverty.

"“With the Blueprint for Prosperity, we are embarking on an innovative, exciting, unprecedented new ways to meet the needs of our most marginalized citizens,” Mayor Wharton said. “This convening is a milestone in the history of our city and we are honored by the participation of some of the best, brightest and most experienced people in this country. I am grateful that they have come to our city to share their knowledge and perspectives about the complex and insidious issue of poverty. This forum allows city leadership to validate the direction of the Blueprint and gain valuable insight about lessons learned as a result of successes and failures, and effective strategies to reduce poverty.”

The Blueprint for Prosperity is different from other initiatives because it is built on partnerships and collaboration between national and local experts; between public/private/philanthropic sectors and between the people who know the challenges of poverty best—the families living in it. To ensure that goals are met, accountability measures are defined, and service providers are held accountable for delivery against goals.

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Under the leadership of Mayor A C Wharton Jr. since 2009, Memphis is becoming a City of Choice by focusing on creating safe and vibrant neighborhoods, investing in young people, creating economic opportunities for all, and delivering excellence in government. Memphis is famous around the world for the convergence of creativity and innovation that produced its most famous export – legendary music; the company that invented modern world commerce – FedEx, and the international leader in curing catastrophic childhood illnesses – St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It has a celebrated entrepreneurial history, more Fortune 500 companies than any other Tennessee city, and it has been named one of the best cities in the U.S. for startups. It is famous as home for Elvis Presley's Graceland, Sun Studios, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Beale Street, the National Civil Rights Museum, and the most unspoiled riverfront on the Mississippi River. City of Memphis, which employs more than 6,000 people with an annual budget of approximately \$650 million, has developed and led programs that have dramatically reduced crime, increased jobs, improved Memphis' quality of life, and attracted national attention and investments in the city. For more information visit www.memphistn.gov.